



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 38

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This newsletter is published by the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

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- * Tax Tips: "What's new for 2010?"
- * Latest News Release from IRS targets Overseas Taxpayers
- * "Where do you vote?" Contest Deadline Approaching

Safety Information for American Students Traveling Abroad

Safety Information for American Students Traveling Abroad As spring break approaches, many students are preparing for a trip abroad. The State Department's website for students traveling overseas provides useful safety and travel information for parents and students alike: studentsabroad.state.gov.

The majority of students will have safe and enjoyable adventures. However, even on the best-planned trips, things can go wrong. Each year more than 2,500 U.S. citizens are arrested abroad, nearly half of them on narcotics charges, including possession of very small amounts of illegal substances. U.S. citizens have been badly injured or killed in accidents, falls, and other mishaps. Many of these incidents have been linked to alcohol and drug use. Other spring break vacationers have been sexually assaulted or robbed because they found themselves in unfamiliar locales, incapable of protecting themselves because of drug or alcohol use, or because they were victims of a "date rape" drug.

The most common cause of death of U.S. citizens overseas, other than natural causes, is by motor vehicle accident. Students traveling abroad should be aware that

standards of safety overseas are different from those in the United States.

We urge all U.S. citizens traveling, studying, or residing abroad to sign up online for our Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP enrollment makes it possible for the State Department to contact the student traveler in the case of a family emergency in the United States or because of a crisis in a foreign country.

Please see the Department of Homeland Security's web site www.getyouhome.gov for more information on the requirements for a passport, passport card, or other approved document to reenter the United States after travel abroad.

For further information contact: Bureau of Consular Affairs
Press inquiries: (202) 647-1488, capressrequests@state.gov Public inquiries: (888) 407-4747 travel.state.gov; studentsabroad.state.gov.

Follow us on Twitter. (twitter.com/TravelGov) Become our fan on Facebook. (www.facebook.com/travelgov) Watch us on YouTube. (<http://www.youtube.com/user/statevideo>)

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The American Citizen Services Unit will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

April 5, Tuesday: Tomb Sweeping Day (清明节 - Qīng Míng jié)

April 30 - May 2, Sat. - Mon.: International Labor Day (劳动节 - Láo Dòng jié)

IRS Filing Deadline Extended

U.S. income tax returns for 2010 are due on April 18, 2011. Please read the following article for more information.

If you reside overseas, or are in the military on duty outside the U.S., you are allowed an automatic 2-month extension to file your return until June 15, 2011; however, any tax due must be paid by the original return due date (April 18) to avoid interest charges.

If you are unable to file your return by the due date, you can request an additional extension to October 17 by filing Form 4868 before the return due date (to determine if further extensions are available go to

www.irs.gov). Please note though that any payments made after June 15 would be subject to both interest charges and failure to pay penalties.

We recommend that you obtain your tax forms online at www.irs.gov. A handy publication for overseas filers is Publication 4732, Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad.

Taxpayers generally use the yearly average exchange rate to report foreign-earned income that was regularly received throughout the year. If you only had a few foreign transactions on particular days, you may prefer to use the exchange rates for such days.

Exchange rates for returns are listed on websites such as the Federal Reserve and the Financial Management Service (FMS) website. Commercial sites, such as OANDA may also be used.



Security Situation - Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Bahrain</u>	03/22/2011
<u>Japan</u>	03/21/2011
<u>Algeria</u>	03/16/2011
<u>Mauritania</u>	03/11/2011
<u>Afghanistan</u>	03/08/2011
<u>Yemen</u>	03/06/2011
<u>Cote d'Ivoire</u>	03/02/2011
<u>Mali</u>	03/02/2011
<u>Eritrea</u>	02/27/2011

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is

constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

Tunisia 03/10/2011

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_t

[w/pa/pa_1766.html](http://www.pa.pa_1766.html).

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit "Americans Traveling Abroad" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

Tax tips: “What's new for 2010?”

The following changes are discussed in more detail in Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax For Individuals, and the Instructions for Form 1040. For additional Tax tips please visit: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/content/0,,id=104608,00.html>

****Exemption Amount.** The amount you can deduct for each exemption has not changed for 2010. It is still \$3,650. But unlike 2009, when you would lose part of your deduction for personal exemptions if your adjusted gross income (AGI) was more than a certain amount, in 2010 you will not lose any part of your deduction for personal exemptions, regardless of the amount of your AGI.

****Standard Deduction Amount.** The standard deduction for taxpayers who do not itemize deductions on Schedule A of Form 1040 is, in most cases, higher for 2010. The amount depends on your filing status, whether you are 65 or older or blind, and whether an exemption can be claimed for you by another taxpayer. The basic standard deduction amounts for 2010 are: Head of Household — \$8,400; Married Filing Jointly and Qualifying Widow (er)s — \$11,400; Married Filing Separately and Single — \$5,700.

****No Additional Standard Deduction for Real Estate Taxes for 2010.** For 2010, you can no longer increase your standard deduction by: State or local real estate taxes, new motor vehicles taxes (for vehicles purchased in 2010), or disaster losses (for disasters occurring in 2010). But, you can increase your standard deduction in 2010 if you: Had a net disaster loss in 2010 occurring in 2008 or 2009 (from Form 4684, line 17), or purchased a new motor vehicle after February 16, 2009, and before January 1, 2010, and paid the sales or excise taxes in 2010. If you increase your standard deduction by either of these items, use Schedule L (Form 1040A or 1040) to figure your standard deduction.

****Alternative minimum tax (AMT).** The tax laws provide tax benefits for certain kinds of income and allow special deductions and credits for certain kinds of expenses. The alternative minimum tax (AMT) attempts to ensure that anyone who benefits from these tax advantages pays at least a

minimum amount of tax. The AMT is a separately figured tax that eliminates many deductions and credits, thus increasing tax liability for an individual who would otherwise pay less tax. The tentative minimum tax rates on ordinary income are percentages set by law. For capital gains and certain dividends, the rates in effect for the regular tax are used. You may have to pay the AMT if your taxable income for regular tax purposes plus any adjustments and preference items that apply to you are more than the AMT exemption amount. For 2010, the AMT exemption amount is increased to \$47,450 for single taxpayers; \$72,450 if married filing jointly or a qualifying widow (er); and \$36,225 if married filing separately.

****Foreign Earned Income.** The maximum foreign earned income exclusion amount available on Form 2555 or Form 2555-EZ is increased to \$91,500. The housing exclusion and/or deduction floor has increased to \$14,640.00.

Note: If you claim the foreign earned income exclusion or the foreign housing exclusion on Form 2555 or Form 2555-EZ, your must figure your tax using the Foreign Earned Income Tax Worksheet found on page 36 of the 2010 Form 1040 Instruction Booklet.



New York To Hold A Special Election For Congress – May 24, 2011

On Tuesday, May 24, 2011, New York will hold a special election for the 26th Congressional District, to fill the seat vacated by Representative Christopher J. Lee. The 26th Congressional District includes the following counties: Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming.

To determine if your legal residence is in the 26th Congressional District, go to: <http://fvap.gov/reference/about-elect-officials/index.html>, and then on to: "United States House of Representatives."

Voting Assistance Officers should contact New York voters from the 26th Congressional District and inform them of this news release and assist them in requesting and returning their absentee ballot.

Register to Vote and Request Your Ballot Now!

To vote in this election you must register by submitting a post-marked Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) by April 29, 2011. New York also allows you to email or fax the FPCA, but you still must mail it as well to insure you meet the signature requirements.

Your FPCA must be received by your local New York Board of Elections Office by May 4, 2011. **Go to FVAP.gov and get started! It only takes a few minutes!** Alternately you may obtain an FPCA from your unit or installation voting assistance officer and at U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide; but

you must follow the New York instructions given at FVAP.gov. Indicate on the FPCA how you would like to receive your absentee ballot, by mail, email, or fax. You **will not** receive a ballot automatically, even if you voted in the November 2, 2010 general election.

If you are registering in person at one of the seven county board of elections offices, the deadline to register is May 13, 2011.

If you are already registered to vote, the deadline for submitting an FPCA to request a ballot is May 17, 2011, or 7 days before the election.

Send the FPCA by Email, Fax or Mail

If you choose to **email** your FPCA, you should send the form to the email address listed below for the correct county office where you reside in the 26th Congressional District. If you choose to **fax** your FPCA, fax the form to the fax number listed below for the correct county office where you reside. You may also use the DoD Electronic Transmission Service to fax your FPCA toll-free. To use the Electronic Transmission Service, use the cover sheet available in the Voting Assistance Guide, or at FVAP.gov, and fax to: (703)-693-5527, DSN 223-5527, or toll-free from the U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to 1-800-368-8683. International toll-free numbers can be found at

FVAP.gov. Voter Alert Telephone: 703-588-1584 E-mail: vote@fvap.gov

Receive Your Ballot

Ballots will be mailed and emailed to you starting on April 8, 2011.

Vote Your Ballot

Your voted ballot must be **post-marked by May 23, 2011**, and must be **received by June 6, 2011**, in order to be counted.

You must return your voted ballot and signed affidavit by regular mail, or via a licensed motor carrier such as Federal Express, UPS or DSL.

Civilians residing outside the U.S.: Contact your closest U.S. Embassy or consulate for specific instructions on how voted ballots, with proper domestic postage attached, can be returned to the United States from any U.S. embassy or consulate. To locate your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, visit <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

If a voter is concerned about not receiving their ballot in time to vote, they may use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB, SF-186). The instructions are available at FVAP.gov. The FWAB is also available in embassies and consulates and military installations around the world.

To check the status of your absentee ballot visit: <https://newyork.overseasvotefoundation.org/overseas/home.htm>.

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district after a long stay here and you formally joined the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), please do not forget to end your enrollment when you leave.

You can end your enrollment by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov> site if you previously enrolled through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form to the U.S. consulate, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Reminders to Parents of Newborn Children

To help the parents of newborn children prepare the necessary documents for their newborns, we would like to inform you of the following:

1) Applying for a Social Security Number (SSN)

You may submit the application for a SSN for your newborn at the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. ACS will then forward your application to the Social Security Administration (SSA) office in Manila for further processing. It typically takes 3-6 months for the SSN card to arrive in China. We strongly recommend that you apply for one as early as you can. A completed form SS-5-FS (Application for a Social Security Card) signed by one parent, the same parent's U.S. passport, your newborn's Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA), and **your newborn's U.S. passport are required for this application.** We recommend that one parent submit the SSN application when he or she comes to pick up the newborn's CRBA and U.S. passport, so that these two tasks can be combined in one trip. Avoid unneeded stress and apply for the SSN well before the IRS tax return filing deadline. The Consulate has no way to expedite the 3-6 months processing time, so please plan ahead. If you have questions, please email to ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

2) Applying for a Chinese visa or a one-time Exit & Entry Travel Permit

Your child has now been issued a U.S. passport. As a foreign citizen residing in China, he or she will also need a Chinese visa or travel permit as required by Chinese law. You should apply for a Chinese visa or travel permit for your child at a nearby office of the Exit & Entry Bureau (EEB) in the province where the child was born.

- If both parents are U.S. citizens or non-Chinese citizens, you are required to report to EEB within one month after your child's birth to apply for a Chinese Visa. **The Chinese visa will be placed in the child's U.S. passport.**
- If one parent is a Chinese citizen, you are required to apply for a one-time Chinese Exit & Entry Travel Permit (different from a Chinese visa) at EEB in order for your child to travel outside of China. The Chinese travel permit will be an independent book. Once your child is outside of mainland China, you may take his or her U.S. passport to a Chinese Embassy or Consulate to apply for a Chinese visa so that your child can return to China as a U.S. citizen.

For details on applications for Chinese visas and travel permits, please contact the EEB office in your area. In Shanghai, the EEB hotline is (021) 2895-1900.

Latest News Release from IRS targets Overseas Taxpayers

IRS announced on February 8th, a new initiative to provide another opportunity to taxpayers who are still hiding money offshore to come forward and settle their tax obligations with their government. The IRS is offering people with undisclosed income from offshore accounts an opportunity to participate in a new, voluntary disclosure initiative in order to get current on their tax returns. The 2011 Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Initiative (OVDI) will be available only through Aug. 31, 2011.

The 2011 initiative has a higher penalty rate than the IRS's previous voluntary disclosure program, which ended on Oct. 15, 2009, but offers clear benefits to

encourage taxpayers to disclose foreign accounts now rather than risk IRS detection and possible criminal prosecution. In addition, the 2011 initiative includes new guidelines to provide fairness to people with smaller amounts of undisclosed assets or unusual situations.

For general details on the initiative, see <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=235695,00.html> For more details on the 2011 initiative, including contact points, mailing addresses, please go to <http://www.irs.gov/compliance/enforcement/article/0,,id=205909,00.html>.

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1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场

(Méi lóng zhèn guǎngchǎng)

Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650

Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours Emergencies:

(86-21) 6433-3936

Open 8:00am - 11:30am

and 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Monday to Friday *Closed on
Tuesday afternoons, weekends,
and holidays.

<http://shanghai.usconsulate.gov>

Someone Asked the Consul:

Where can I find information on renewing Chinese visas in English?

For those of you that like sorting out your visa problems yourself, ie., without the help of a visa agency, here's a website:

http://gaj.sh.gov.cn/shga/gweb/wsbs/enterprise_index.jsp?param=2 that you should probably bookmark.

It's the new English-language website launched by the Shanghai Exit-Entry Administration Bureau for foreigners needing to extend their visas. On this website you'll be able to download application forms, make online applications, check the status of your application and make online enquiries. Now all you'll need to do is show up at the bureau at the appointed time to get your visa or permit!

"Why do you vote?" Contest Deadline Approaching

Now is your chance to express your thoughts on the importance of voting by entering the 2011 FVAP Voting Slogan Contest and Poster Contest. The April 8, 2011 deadline for submissions is fast approaching.

The winning contest entries will be used to promote interest in the electoral process among military members, their families and U.S. citizens worldwide for the 2012 presidential election

year. It is easy to participate via use of <http://challenge.gov>.

The FVAP Poster Contest seeks artwork illustrating the importance of and/or how it feels to be an American citizen voting absentee from anywhere in the world. This artwork will be used to create the 2012 voting poster and Voting Assistance Guide cover. The FVAP Poster Contest details are located at www.fvap.gov and

<http://challenge.gov/challenges/116>. All artistic skill levels are encouraged to create and submit entries.

